

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 03364 011759Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FOR H (ASST SEC BENNET) AND EUR/NE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINR UK
SUBJECT: HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

REF: LONDON 1641

THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED A LETTER DATED FEB 27 FROM THE HOME OFFICE APOLOGIZING FOR THE DELAY OCCASIONED BY THE NECESSITY TO CONSULT WITH THE COMMISSIONER OF THE (LONDON) METROPOLITAN POLICE AND RESPONDING TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE'S REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO BRITISH POLICE RECORDS AND KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSONS CONCERNED WITH THE ARREST OF JAMES EARL RAY AS FOLLOWS:

QUOTE I SHOULD PERHAPS BEGIN BY EXPLAINING THAT THERE A LIMITATIONS ON CHIEF OFFICERS OF POLICE MAKING AVAILABLE INFORMATION OBTAINED BY THEIR OFFICERS IN THE COURSE OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS. CERTAIN INFORMATION WOULD, OF COURSE, BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE IN THE COURSE OF CRIMINAL OR, IN THIS CASE, EXTRADITION PROCEEDINGS BEFORE A COURT, BUT THERE IS NO RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION HELD BY THE POLICE EVEN FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN THIS COUNTRY.

THERE ARE ALSO PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES. THE ARREST OF RAY TOOK PLACE ALMOST TEN YEARS AGO AND MOST OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OFFICERS CONCERNED WITH THE CASE HAVE SINCE RETIRED FROM THE FORCE. INDEED, THE POLICE OFFICER PRINCIPALLY CONCERNED, CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT BUTLER, IS NOW DEAD. ANY OFFICERS STILL SERVING, WHO WERE INVOLVED IN THE CASE, WERE OF RELATIVELY JUNIOR RANK AT THE TIME AND MAY NOT BE IN A POSITION TO GIVE THE SELECT COMMITTEE THE TYPE OF INFORMATION IT MAY REQUIRE.

REALISING THE PUBLIC IMPORTANCE OF THE MURDERS WITH WHICH THE SENATE COMMITTEE IS CONCERNED, THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES WISH TO CO-OPERATE AS FAR AS THEY CAN, AND ARE PREPARED TO SEE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMITTEE, IF THEY COME TO THIS COUNTRY, AND TO FACILITATE THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION BY THE POLICE AS APPROPRIATE. WE SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE IN A MUCH BETTER POSITION TO HELP IF THE COMMITTEE COULD PROVIDE IN ADVANCE THE INFORMATION REQUESTED AS TO THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE INQUIRY AND THE USE THAT WOULD BE MADE OF ANY EVIDENCE OBTAINED. I SHOULD EMPHASISE, HOWEVER, THAT THERE CANNOT BE ANY PROSPECT OF THE COMMITTEE BEING GRANTED DIRECT ACCESS TO POLICE FILES. END QUOTE.

BREWSTER

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